POETRY QUARTERLY

edited by Wrey Gardiner
and published by The Grey Walls Press
7 Crown Passage, Pall Mall

VOLUME 14, NO. 4, WINTER 1952-53

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL: *page* 99

NOEL WELCH: *To Joan of Arc* 100

LOUIS JOHNSON: *Poem for a Separation Through Illness* 101

SYDNEY TREMAYNE: *Gannets Diving* 102

TODJA TARTSCHOFF: *Against the Darkness* 104

N. K. CRUICKSHANK: *A Minor Myth* 105

CHRIS BJERKNES: *Simile* 106

ETHEL POLLINE: *Balcony on the Hudson (New York)* 107

HOWARD GRIFFIN: *The Voyager* 108

ALLAN RIDDELL: *Remember, Love, the Elephant and Python* 109

EARLE BIRNEY: *Ballad of Mr. Chubb* 110

JOHN FAIRFAX: *Once I Saw the Space* 111

VINCENT FERRINI: *Can You Hear* 112

MARGARET TOARELLO: *Before a Slave Auction Block* page 114
JEAN BEARN: *Loquillo Beach, Puerto Rico* 115
NORMAN KREITMAN: *Morning was a River* 116
JOHN LAWRENCE BILNEY: *The Sunset is Relaxed* 117
ROBERT BELOOF: *Probably it was not so Neat in the Novel* 118
G. MAYER: *Like a Long Legged Golden Lady* 119
W. H. BOORE: *Alone* 119
ANDREW SALKEY: *An Afternoon in Port Royal* 120
HUGO MANNING: *Light, There is Light* 123

Subscription Rates

8s. per annum, including postage, or 2s. 1d. per copy. Subscriptions, contributions and all correspondence should be addressed to THE GREY WALLS PRESS, 7 Crown Passage, Pall Mall, London, S.W.1. accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope if a reply is desired.

Although unsolicited MSS. are read with care, owing to pressure of work, they cannot always be returned at once, nor can the Editor undertake any responsibility for such MSS., a copy of which should be retained by the author. In case of acceptance, a proof will be sent before publication.

Subscription Rates in U.S.A. 1 *dollar*

Distribution in U.S.A. by British Book Centre
122 East 55th Street, New York

CANADA

263-7 Adelaide Street West, Toronto.

SOUTH AFRICA

M. Darling (Pty) Ltd , Cape Town.

EDITORIAL

MANY of the poems in this issue are by American writers but former editorial policy of printing their work together, without mention of origin, has been preserved because it is felt that the language of verse is the same whether its author is living in Hull, California or Puerto Rico. Principal criterion of acceptance in fact is the aural felicity and rhythm of language. Too great attention to form is not enough and can too easily today result in a dead mass of clotted words and no poem. There is recently a noticeable tendency away from the lyric towards a more definite content in narrative form. This trend will probably get stronger.

With this issue POETRY QUARTERLY completes its thirteenth year and wishes its readers a happy new one. Editing a poetry magazine is a thankless task and would be intolerable if one were not aware of the gratitude of at least a small but faithful following.

We continue to extend a welcome to all overseas writers and are willing to reprint poems and prose from U.S.A. and Commonwealth magazines which only reach a very small public in this country. We still believe in the community of poets scattered over many continents and have faith in the evergreen virility of modern poetry.

NOEL WELCH

To Joan of Arc

I think you probably paid too much attention to your voices
You should have regarded them as nothing more
Than Spring chatterings on the lawn,
And been content to tell your rosary among round buds
And when you had said a prayer for every bead
Made each bud a bead and said for each a prayer
And tired out your young ardour,
Accosting April with long hair and soft skirts
Lifted to avoid the morning dew,
Not in complicated armour and astride a horse
Your cropped head held like an imperious boy.
Small wonder men confute with you. You usurp their part
And trouble many hearts. Oh impatient maid
Already in the sharp Spring you feel the summer,
The broad leaves, the fantastic flowers.
You extricate with eager fingers and tear
From the bird's throat its capricious song.
The little buds the starlings in the trees,
Not entirely innocent of Heaven, deceive.
Leave them to dream a season, dream if you like with them
Be tender and idle.

She does not hear these careful words
But only the loud clamour in the branches
While to her rifling gaze the last buds yield their pointed petals
And make an intricate pattern about those shuddering limbs
Astonished at the fierce heat of June.

LOUIS JOHNSON

Poem for a Separation through Illness

How often the wish has been known in the sinews before
to resort to the solitary walk and life; and now,
the wish being harboured home, how pedestrian.
Badgered for time, I forgot, in my pride, how the raw
moon used to fester and hurt the walls of the hour—
how time would drive into the night to oblivion

escaping the terrible silence. Then, you were one
I sought from the frenzies of self; for you were
the country peopled with fairies, the almanac of love
whose leaves I would tear in haste to build the sun
of another glowing day. Time circles blindly here,
again, without expectancy: the calendar is passport to a grave.

I was glad when you went, for the distant distractions of pain
were more than I wanted to cope with, though fearfully real.
But the wrench of my sense was a mite by your mine of hurt
and the lode you fathomed was vast. I could not remain
indifferent while you bled—but nor could my skin feel
the agony that dripped its steady scarlet through your heart.

Oh wife, lie safe: where will I hide this wish,
more real than selfishness, but in your hand
quiet and tame as a dove. What does night prove
but the fantastic shelter of your flesh
bound over in the drugged and surgical land
is my one landscape now—the island of our love.

SYDNEY TREMAYNE

Gannets Diving

Wind flowing against the trees, a tireless flowing,
Sky, land and sea all tones of darkness blowing:
The sea pours round the tangle-covered rock,
The peaks drag rain tails under cloud more black
For knuckling white of waves' roped ridges fraying.
Sea noise and wind noise. Wind and all things flowing.
And gannets hurled like knives.
Automatons,
Stakhanovite furies passionless as planes,
They twist to the wind and crash,
Hail down with bomb-finned wings, striking up spray,
Rise, twist to the wind and crash,
Repetitive as the sea.
Where all these searchers circle, the long tides
Tempt off the known shore with the pull of slowness.
Near the low rocks the patient heron wades,
Of stone-still greyness—
As if a stone had eyes.

End here, for language ends; it is the abyss.
Abandon hope to hold those holocaust seas
Or feed all time into one pair of eyes.

Between a tide and a tide
To be still where is no stillness;
To keep no word in the head,
For no word knows wholeness;

To raise no defence, nor shore
The tideswept bastion;
To forget, and to be aware,
Asking no question.

To be calm as a grounded boat
When sea flows in
And shoals swim in and out
Through hulk of bone;

To be freed from the gannet will
Brought flailing down:
Then could I harbour all
Earth's days in one.

But between a wave and a wave
Is too wide waking,
And the heart worries at love
Or the eyes at seeking,

And coarse rock rasps the hand.
What should be known
But the wearing of the wind
Colder than stone?
The question asked is inevitable mistaking.

Weave no more words between
For death of meaning.
Simply, the rain came down
To the sea's running:

Above the cannibal sea
The gannets diving;
Cloud scattered, torn away,
The whole sky moving,
And the force of life and death.

The search comes circle, ask no more of truth,
Your poem coracle for tide's retrieving.

Let the ships pass that know why they are going,
Their white trails on the sea, their smoke trails blowing,
And turn, turn the low unwilling wave
Over the flat sea where the quick fires move,
Drizzling of sunlight. Let the wind be playing
Hardly at all, and the long clouds be lying
Still as the spread-out islands. In this pause
At one tide's end, before a new tide flows,
Listen. Sounds ride on elemental silence.
Now is the untranslatable coherence
That tolerates no image in its stead.
Offshore a seal heaves up his glistening head

Wallowing in light, his breath a deep-sea sighing.
He sinks; the shoals that dart from his pursuing
Send no stir to the surface. Shade your eyes,
Look into space, how secretive it is,
Fire-dance of whirlpools, sun and all things flowing.
There is no stillness here, only the growing
Pull of direction gathering up the tide,
A louder sound on the stones, a sway in the weed.
The wind grows busy as a shepherd's dog.
Cold instincts guide
Gannets returning on their sword-blade wings.

TODJA TARTSCHOFF

Against the Darkness

translated by JAMES KIRKUP

Outside in the street a child is standing,
He stares into the darkness of the night
Where wind and rain are blustering
About their mastery and might.
Child, be not afraid, lift up your pure face!
Speak to the great blusterers,
Tell them
I shall not bow my head!
Your power is the blackness of night:
But my friend the daylight is at hand,
The bright sun wakes with him, and then
You will be as nothing once again.

N. K. CRUICKSHANK

A Minor Myth

(As it might be re-written by two of our major myth-lovers, Dr. E. S. and Mr. W. R. R.)

I

In the green Winter night the Winter's bird
Cried to the Dust, 'I am cold, after that arrow's kiss.
Who was it who aimed at the golden Bough and pierced
My breast as red as the dew that weeps in the veins
When Autumn amber-bearded comes to the holy fields?

And one of a trivial crew such as had drawn
The car of Aphrodite near the lion-bearded Sun
Chirped then, 'It was I, was I, O my dear, my darling.
My arrow was gold as the sun-kissed darts that sped
From the quivering string of amber-thighed Artemis.'

The voice ceased.

And another, raging, spoke:
'I, an old fly, grandmother of all flies,
Yet who was once a gilded mote that danced
On emerald noons of Spring, for the long-petalled Sun—
Who have seen too much, have looked on the world's sorrow—
Saw also this.'

And all the trivial voices
Hidden amongst the long, emerald leaves of Spring—
Mere notes compared to the lion-bearded thunder
Tossing its raging mane—made thin lament
For him who had had to mix his trivial dust
With the great, beardless Dust that was lately Midas,
Helen and Tudor Henry's amber-coloured beard.

II

The twigs jogged once. Higgledy-piggling,
Leaves chuted down. The ill wind of that shot
Wafted its one good to a wrily wriggling
Worm that the red-breast had been watching. What
Low feathered thing fathered this crime? Would he,
The grey tile-urchin, have turned archer? Could
Fowl be so foul? Ah yes; unblushingly
The bird confessed its deed to the fussed wood.

Surely one saw it—saw those blood-drips shed?
Some peepholed, O some pained, pin-pointing eye,
Surely? A fly fizzed: "Mine—from A to Z",
Buzzed of the hope sawn through, the singed-off song.
And all the gurgling, gargling, cocked-eyed, crowing,
Air-elbowing choir, hey-ding-a-dinging throng,
Left off their billing, took instead to blowing;
Broke swoops to weep, and paused awhile in hatching
Breastfuls of chicks for choking, for breath-catching.

CHRIS BJERKNES

Simile

The shifting gull spreading its
driven wing into the linen mists
like the pencilled time wrinkling
the blossoms lips or dawn with its
red fist squeezing the littoral mud of night

the moons timidity made its pale reply
as from the shadow the dream rediscovers its
reluctant lines, the fire burns and leaves its light
a spider weaves its paradigm and hides

out of sight, the blue fly out of the question
mark of its flight is trapped
in its dissonant shout grows weak
and after the spider feeds, is dropped like a violet
into the dusty trellis of a leaf.

ETHEL POLLINE

Balcony on the Hudson (New York)

O come from the small arched tunnel to this ledge
where the grey birds fly in a sullen triangular wedge.

Autumn is furrowing. Hyalines of cold.
Small boats drifting . . . bells once tilted,

tolled.

Slow sounds estrange,
the City's sunken brawl
as one would weave in Ivy to a wall.

Here on a Sunday river's promontory
Circean-bright,
the spray into poems of primal allegory
nestling the wing-braced light;
and the tideways intoned forever
the coral mazes flood,
as river into river . . .
the plasmas of the blood.

Unbrutal amoral agonized,
season of sumptuous sorrow—
here where the Ilion-hearted
may mourn for the myths of tomorrow,

Think: in this plume of space,
will the sea give up its dead,
water turn to wine,
and weeds bring bread
the tides have leavened?
As the change comes slow,
conceived in mountain-timing . . . lava flow,
glacial patterns, erosions,
cities in sea shells?

Remembering Edens vanished,
in Bedlams fled.

HOWARD GRIFFIN

The Voyager

Released from mask of self he goes
into the car, the train, the inn;

no one knows the young experienced face,
leaves no luggage in the panelled hall.

An old gypsy takes his cloak,
smiling, speaks to him of death.

He knows kinsmen by a nod,
way of turning, gesture, word.

Obscurity attracts him more than fame;
at the crossroads he will found a school.

Talking to that Abbé in the park,
gives a former classmate's name.

In mixed company appears a fool,
listens well, is innocent.

Speaks to all, never gets bogged down;
moves easily from town to edge.

Confused, draws the slanted cross
on the wrong door, is fortunate

and takes each risk, seizes truth.
changes in weather like shot silk

Surely young, born in tribute-state;
mild enough; hates allegiance.

Needs music. When he walks
eyes unfold to him like flowers

to sun. Communicates with dogs;
joins with no one except the unborn.

Scornful of politics and swift
to grasp the nearest means to free

himself, others . . . A man for love.
He cannot love his brothers.

ALLAN RIDDELL

Remember, Love, the Elephant and Python

Remember, Love, the elephant and python
marvellous those isles (the seas were candy floss)
we stranded Time the summer while it lasted
the children rolled our hooped hearts away

The snow fell on our houses gable high
then Christmas came, the longed-for pair of skates
and love on ice was ever for a winter
the children bowled our hooped hearts away

In darkened rooms with slide and magic lantern
the months purred by like moths about a flame
till April was a morn the blinds pulled up
the children rolled our hooped hearts away

Across the lake the dreaming firefly dusk
billowed our sails and sped us into creeks
it seemed the stars would never have an ending
the children bowled our hooped hearts away

The children rolled our hooped hearts away—
the months purred by like moths about a flame—
the snow fell on our houses gable high—
remember, Love, the elephant and python.

EARLE BIRNEY

Ballad of Mr. Chubb

O Mr. Chubb sells *Chubbsidized*
Cars on Terms
His RUMBLE IN—ROCKET OUT! has quite outsized
nextdoor's neon PERMS
not to speak
of Farmer Woddy's wooden *worms*
beyond the town's fouled creek
between two flowing hills in Minnesota

Across the sizzling highway o abandoned Mr. Chubb
likes to look
at each skirted golfing dub
who goes legging, legging it over
SLIM'S HOOK
AND SLICE CLINIC
beside a flaxblue lake in Minnesota

Mauve loudspeakers
over the PA
and MA
COMFORT STATION try to keep
Mr. Chubb o in whistle
with tunes expanding, expanding like thistle
from the goldgrey
jukebox of the HOME SWEET
HOMEBURGER CAFE
by the blue flax fields of Minnesota

But Mr. Chubb worries
of auto strikes as he hurries, as he hurries
with his cash and his daughter
past weedy
farms and cemeteries
to his lonely week-
end "Bide-a-wee"
beside a sand-dune shore in Minnesota

And Mr. Chubb is cursed
with a fear and a fever
—o not that Lena won't live with him either—
but RUSSIA MAY DROP H-BOMB FIRST
before he's dug, dug, against the worst,
a leadlined shelter
beneath his private hill in Minnesota

Yet all this hubbub
is wasted in Chubb.
With a hook and a slice
forbidden Slim
and flaxeyed Lena tonight
will strike to end all strikes
and dig, dig him a worm-
lined home without terms
under the waving nettles of Minnesota

Under the golfers' curves
o the jukebox stilled in his mind
Mr. Chubb will headlined
lie *Asleep in Jesus* while
with her murderous lover
Mr. Chubb's permwaved Lena
rockets far, far away and over
the flaxen flowing hills of Minnesota

JOHN FAIRFAX

Once I Saw The Space

Once I saw the space
Of procreation
Between the bird face
Flight and migration.

This the autumn gave
To folded distance
That the movements have
Stopped in their dance.

VINCENT FERRINI

Can You Hear

I

hear
the heartbeat
in the stone

hear the golden
coins
slipping
from the poplar
to the ocean

he is picking them up
for orphans

while
pebbles grinding
each other
against the undertow
pull
the night
down
with them

he is among
the talk of the
pebbles
carrying in his
pockets
oracles

hear the
heartbeat in his
hands
wandering
among broken
cities
healing people

hear the tongue
of time
licking
the walls away
hear
the grasses
making
love
to the dead
wanting to reach
the living

O he is
the stranger
in your body

II

can you hear
the roots
of him

O the stones
are sobbing

for the people lost
in their own dark
caves

will they ever
come out

when they take
the stranger in

they will have
in their palms the
running water
of song

and what is the
song of the water

the roots are people
and the people are
roots
untapped

O sunlight
explode the tightening
walls of the
caves

and set the air
on fire
with the freedom
love is bursting with

there is still time

for you and I
are the tree roots

of untold
miracles

O people
to
find

MARGARET TOARELLO

Before a Slave Auction Block

Through murmurings of my heart your world's mind speaks
reigning intact among antipodes,
a tenet braiding sound in chains of ease
congeals my throat like grief in the age's beaks.

Over the wound called wistfulness leans Time
imprisoning in mourning all your days,
yet from the well-springs of your Night ghosts blaze
as comets out of martyrdom's still clime.

Oh veins whose sap rocks me with fevers chime!
Miasmas from Man's will shall fork your roots,
shod in the Heart of Being his prints shape notes
that hoist in image stalks of the race's crime.

JEAN BEARN

Loquillo Beach, Puerto Rico

The subtle art of understanding
creates in us a vacuum of hope;
the quiet relief of wisdom newly found
is quelled and dies beneath the flow of words.
Words that are meant to comfort often wound,
still we cannot deny their innate strength:
words that caress our minds to sleeping, ache
and drown our senses in their sensuous fall.
We listen, searching for our own minds' sake
for some small hint of echoing desire
that would alight the smouldering match we hold
but often the swift fall of our heart's tears
drowns the slow answer, blinds the longed-for eyes
and leaves us once more searching. So the years
pass us, neglect us, and we grow old and wise
and die unhappily remembering
past loves, past hands, past fears.

NORMAN KREITMAN

Morning was a River

Morning was a river
breaking her birth among hills, the sun
lifting arms of prophecy above her head;
already her destiny had walked into our city.

With gulls oracular
to mock her triumph, she paused in a room of fog,
and emerged, conscious and naked, with all innocence torn
to a collar of gems dazzling the water's neck.

Oil of discarded dreams
lay filmed upon her golden ankles, and in her arms
a flotsom of sorrows charred at yesterday's fires
ached public and unlovely. Between her flowering breasts

floated dying barges
left like mouldering hopes to the hoots and derision of time.
And her hair was a harp where puffy fish bounced noiselessly
dangling their eggs unacknowledged behind them.

But O her smile,
her smile was the wake of those who ring
their footsteps only upon water, their memories
sinking like pebbles down to the immortal mud.

Then truly was she Thames,
supremely Our Lady of Sorrows, staggering with love—
till the sun swung aloft like a hammer
and broke her into a Niagara of noon.

* * * *

Evening was a star
gleaming in the ghost of our city,
holding in hands of smoke the long echoes
of the heart, and her shadow upon broken waters.

And we remembered her
grown tipsy and haggard for our sake,
opening her side that our errors might enter
deeply to die in the safety of her womb. 'O holy mother'

we whispered,
as your tattered body dissolved into darkness,
and all the voices of our city mourned for you
and for ourselves. Only those who died with you

remained certain,
they who left our docks and walked a voyage
into the hills, where secret in a fold of rock
is morning born a river.

JOHN LAWRENCE BILNEY

The Sunset is Relaxed

the sunset is relaxed like a blonde
with her hair on a blue silk pillow
inviting and seductive.
there is no reaching the beyond
nor the below
union in passion is unproductive.
the goddess waves a wand
the gesture says I know
the intuition is instinctive
here in the sound
of feathers falling, the low
of growing lawn, is the indicative
of warm inspiration
not in copulation
but the symbol thereof.

ROBERT BELOOF

Probably it was not so Neat in the Novel

> "The lone woman passenger on board a freighter symbolizes sex in its most primitive form to most of the crew, but when a hurricane strikes the ship, it becomes apparent that the woman is out of her mind."
>
> —from a book review.

The question is, thought Memnon, who's insane.
Image it ocean liner
Or freighter,
The portless world sails with but one woman passenger
At a time.

Certainly the "but" is mad, but since the rain
Warns that waves of disaster
Fester,
One is not so certain one faces a non sequitur.
Sublime.

Or probably maddest of all those few blest
Who her sex, so primitive,
Did not move
As the violent and incontinent tempest drove.
Did the rest

Really suffer correction of eye from the hurricane?
It doesn't, to the freighter,
Matter,
So long as all the climatic nodes of insanity together
Chime.

G. MAYER

Like a Long Leggèd Golden Lady

Like a long leggèd golden lady
Stands the dark rose in a glitter of glass,
Like a poised woman with a small white wrist
Moving in tinkling sun and laughter shadows,
Cool luxuries and Summer indolence,
Stands the dark rose; bends a little
Over the gold glow pool of the table
As if her silken fragrance looks to find
An answering ripple of red petals and rose.

W. H. BOORE

Alone

I am one flesh with this unquiet world—
These tight-skinned bursting seas, this ground-dust stone;
These gnashing branches and this restless air;
I am one with these, and yet alone.

No heart beats but my own heart beats within it;
No breath pervades whose sigh is not my own;
No light reflects but my own lashes' glistening;
I am in it all, but yet alone.

The sweating bough exudes my body's fever,
And in the twig is seized my unfleshed bone.
The mated flower is withered of my passion;
Through it all am I, and yet alone.

Cold is the soil that hollows to my coming;
And I am cold. The seed is deeply sown,
And I am deeply buried to fruition—
One with it all and yet, and yet alone.

AN AFTERNOON IN PORT ROYAL

WHEN the car came to a stop for the last time, which totalled the fiftieth screech of brakes, I stretched my tired arms, yawning as the shades of echoes went soaring out to the fringe of the fishing village plunging themselves to sudden death in the muddy grumbling sea, which sprawled around the island awaiting the final trick of elemental conjuring. I began to walk towards the dissipated city of "Blood, doubloons and lace".

I saw mirrored in the haze, reflections from dead eyes, popping out from trampled buccaneer-graves, the fluff of indigo-blue pantaloons gathered around a sturdily-shod foot which crunched Spanish flesh and kicked Spanish gold under captive Castilian womenfolk.

I saw in this misty-projected dream, nights, ink black but red, rolling into years with voices like Louis Galde's rebounding from flourishing blood-seamed tenements. I walked on. Suddenly, I was checked by striking my foot against a slab of mouldy marble. It took me some time to focus my attention on what I began to decipher. I looked at the letters on the epitaph becoming jumbled in the evening's clamminess, pondering the ground on which I stood. I felt my hands stretching forward. I tried to stop this mad act, but by then I had opened the tomb of the priest, and strange, the dust I was expecting to see swirl out to greet me was not there. I then began searching for the story of the priest.

I heard the wrestling of words behind me. I turned to see a tired fish-vendor making attempts "to catch my eye". We scrambled across to a rum-shop. In this bar-room were men and women who gazed fixedly at their glasses. They saw salvation in the urine-coloured liquid. Sand filled their eyes and heart-sacks. They looked sodden with grey despondency. In dress and speech these people in splints, were like the others in the city of Kingston but for the fact that Morgan's filth-echoes still splashed the land when the sea slept at dawn.

I raised my glass of rum, which became level with a sign that wore its grime with composure. It read: *Drink at the Buccaneer Inn, where Henry Morgan drank.* My eyes left the advertisement, and, wandering around the walls, rested on the tender's face. As I stared, I thought how marked children grew when delivered into the hands of the beast.

This girl was born among the dead with heralds of sin awaiting her frail neck. She grew to love waste, and later on married

into the gloom; and within the dark of the half-echoes, she was bearing her first child. Our glances were exchanged suddenly, and I cried for the unborn.

In the dusty-fever of the room my tears hung like butter on a hot ball when from across our narrow paths she was attempting to understand them but could not. I watched her pouting frock, knowing how little time was left for the clearing of the way.

I loved this face and wanted to move near it, feeling its every pain, because I saw the field sprawling open, exhibiting the frolicsome worm. In an instance the chatter of the drinkers rose to my drone-like thoughts of Maro, for that was what my friend from the priest's grave had called her, leaving me caught between reddened disgust and nervous twitchings. A coil of pungent soot what the sails of the gory-decades past did with ripped mast-crawled into the bar-room,

A freighter nearing the harbour had done this in mockery of cloth and powder-balls. I swung out of the room. Then I began walking into the dreary street, turning down the main lane. I came upon two children playing at shop-keeping. Their faces grimy with mango stains rimmed by natural dirt looked at me in white innocence. After answering the question if I was "busha boss" or not I did what I thought was patting God on the head then moved away under a sea-gull screaming, "Blood, doubloons and lace".

A voice that sounded like breezes bathing banyans filled the air shrouding me in the ghost-gauze of the depressed hour. A woman of eighty-five clung to my arm pushing me towards the entrance of Nelson's Quarter Deck. The old hand shook as the jagged stones tossed us between musty-brown pages of history.

Now Granny Doris talked of the bright days before her time. Her baked, shrivelled skin turned ebon-black resembling Maro's, as the tales piled one on the other. Again I was overcome by the urge to cry when I thought of the one being so conscious of her hell-walls and the other so totally engulfed yet unaware. I saw Maro's thin neck exposed. No rock under which to crawl. Nobody actually lived as Maro lived, as young, as free, yet as damned. I knew that Granny Doris was stronger in the knowledge of the past. I saw the icy beads of frustration gurgling to the surface awaiting the eventful baptism of the thinner neck. I became numb, and Granny Doris drifted away from me. I turned facing the day rapidly drowning itself in the mangroves, joining the susurration of the angry mosquitoes.

Suddenly I knew that I was not alone. I heard that old voice talking in an endless stream of the gold plates presented to the city by the Buccaneer, whose stained hands remained unwashed through the ages. I was dragged to the old Parish Church. Doris now told me of the wondrous gradual denudation of the land into the sea ever since. . . . Somehow I was lost again. Yet I was not alone. I had Maro's hand leading her away from the quagmire.

Now it was Granny Doris's voice that I heard beating without. She cursed the depravity of Old Port Royal. She praised the interposition of Providence that brought desolation. From her painting I saw the loaded wharves, the jammed warehouses, scattered pieces of eight, silver buckles, and the strutting criminals doing the final dance to the roaring reverberation braking the terrain from the mountains in the East, seaming the valleys to the beach where the sea, in a grand sweeping gesture, was washing houses, land and trees like matchwood along a loaded gutter. With this shot came the last picture where I could see the land yawning, its great mouths crunching in speculative gulps on the collapse of the stored filth of the blood-filled debauched society.

The evening shook beneath me as I thought of the convulsive laughter of the earthquake twirling out to Negril Point with the mighty concussion of the sea clapping like thunder and claiming all.

At this point I felt the stripping of the minutes. I knew how far we had gone towards the second immersion. My old guide stumbled on. The fever from the horizon hung menacingly down on my brow. I left her smiling and nodding over a few coins which shimmered in her coffee-brown palm like stars in her late dry years.

Now I walked alone. I passed over salt-drenched yards, counting the twisted hands of knotted grasses peeping above the stranglehold of rust on old cannon-funnels. A slight wind blew softly joining the murmurs of the sand-flies playing hide-and-seek between the images of Maro, the two children with mango-stained faces and Granny Doris, who sprang up like posters across my view.

Now I was wondering at the untended cries recoiling in concentric circles above these heads being ushered in on the filth's staleness and out again to the patient vast.

I was now tiring of the land and stepped to the worn jetty by

the coast, avoiding the fishermen who were making their nets ready for the night's bounty. In the distance from the right was the bell that rang when the tides were angry. This bell clung to a sunken Cathedral buried during 1692, the year when "the richest and wickedest city on earth" was to have become a memory, drifting in countless aching voids; and from its thaumaturgic qualities of brilliance, sessions of unleashed depression should have rolled far into every evening's sunset.

For awhile I stood gazing at the first canoe leaving shore with its net dragging on the wet sand, then I hid my face, turning away from the lapping jeers of the knowledgeable sea.

ANDREW SALKEY.

LIGHT, THERE IS LIGHT

THE woman in the pub appealed to my imagination not because of her vitality and wildness but because of what was unknown about her: the individual's secret memory and history.

Like a wild temptress she was. In my mind's eye I can see her: tall, tipsy, her long yellow hair crowned with a velvet cap of vivid purple, her swagger style coat hardly longer than her skirt. Like a gay long-limbed dancer, slender and garrulous, her face kept on changing its expression (pseudo-goddess into pseudo-gargoyle, from beauty to bitterness). She was possibly in her early thirties.

A stranger, she shattered the relative stillness of the saloon bar where the regulars sat like bemused characters in a cartoon by Giles. As she sat on a high stool drinking gin and soda I noticed that her flesh-coloured stockings were badly torn. Her hands and fingers were like those of a pantomimist—swaying, ever-moving as if in an unfelt wind. Sometimes she fingered the torque around her neck with a faint suggestion of nervousness.

I watched fat Egyptian cigarettes dangle and die between her lips, listened to her sonorous voice which occasionally sank, became soft and low like a mournful viola, *sotto voce*. Even her accent changed—from the la-di-da to the faintly cockney.

Most of the time she addressed all the cronies in the saloon bar. Some of the things she said, "I'm tough, I'm sensitive. I'm so in love with life that it's killing me, quickly . . . What's the

matter with you all? Staring at me like that, like a bloody iron curtain! No, I'm not going to sponge. Promise. Got money tonight. Independent woman, see? That's me. Some things I just don't do, never do 'em—never take money for it, never write novels, never vote for the Tories . . . Any gentleman of the press here? What, not one? I wanner be quoted. No gentleman specialising in crime, cant and camiknickers? No? Too bad.. (She mentioned a number of well-known public figures.) Do you know what they are? I'll tell you. Shits, crooks. Give 'em titles—that's what they deserve! . . . Don't look at me like that, honey. (She addressed the barman softly, cajolingly.) Do you want me to make a fuss of you? No? Well, never mind. Let me have my last drink, there's a dear. I promise I won't be naughty. Promise . . . Trouble with me—the whole trouble with me is that I'm full of poetry and piss. See what I mean? H'upp—h'upp . . ."

Her words evoked an admixture of frowns, hearty guffaws and embarrassed smiles. A bassoon-like, deprecatory voice came from a plump man with a huge brown moustache standing by a pin-table with a glass of beer in his hand. "Shouldn't be allowed." he declared. "Must have a screw loose somewhere. Shouldn't be allowed."

The woman finished her drink, slithered off the stool and moved towards the plump man, her eyes sparkling. "No," she drawled as she stared at his twitching face. "No, I won't bite you—you magnificent lump of misery with—with whiskers! Think I'm a capricious cow, don't you? Don't you? But you're wrong, quite wrong. I'm an angel, second class. And you, my pet, are my darlingest sugar-daddy! So there. Adieu. Be cheerful. Be good."

She tickled the man's chin and disappeared suddenly, the doors of the bar swinging behind her.

I remember going out into the Hampstead street soon afterwards, into the cool nocturnal stillness like one dazed. I remember bumping into a dustbin by a doorway, seeing a dead rat in the gutter, hearing for a few moments the monotonous and muted sounds of scales being played on a piano somewhere in the vicinity.

We are mysterious. We are truly unfathomable. We refer to ourselves as people and it is then, within such a conglomeration, that we are nameless yet known. But it is when we name and discover the individual that human mystery is revealed, the unknown buried deep in the humus of life.

How serene are the fields seen from afar! How simple is the coral island whose minutiæ are unsuspected! Similarly, when one views the human scenery where men are a vast host and where the ego's separateness is lost, all is so stark and clear. It seems that there's a time for this view of the whole so that the isolated sun may recover its place, return once more to the great band of stars. And the world of self like an unwanted child will no longer weep alone . . .

It seems that the ego is always sick, creating suffering fantasy —seems like a distorting-mirror, deceptive, wildly capricious. Yes, there's a time when the world of self falls out of love with itself, empties its nagging demands into powerful externalisations, seeks the great calm which may come with the surrender of separateness. Yet doesn't such a surrender, however momentary, lead to other kinds of distortions, hypnotic illusions?

Feel a little confused. Much of what I say must be ambiguous and ridiculous. Can't be avoided.

Even as the earthworm fulfils a function for man (unknown to itself), so we, too, may be frail servants of that which we can't understand. And that may be an incipient God-meaning in the process of evolution. How else can our errors and disasters be explained? So I feel that each one of us must go gladly towards a special crisis and end.

No one escapes the whole of existence where failure has a purpose and even sin is innocent.

Much time has elapsed.

The stars are sinking, lost in the sky's sea.

Electric lamp: must be switched off.

Here is a deadline, point of departure . . . And the door is open, leads to the moment when the cock's voice like a brilliant toy trumpet pierces silken silence, leads also to a reality which returns with the arrival of the milk and the morning paper. I must be ready. There is nothing to lose in the attempt to find a momentary place out there in the world of birds and beasts. There is nothing to lose in the shuddering ethos where the eye must try to see as if for the very first time. Here is also a place of return: sanctum, entrance.

Light, there is light.

The diurnal see-saw moves visibly. And light falls on stone. And hands of light peel the night's dead skin. And lips of light kiss a Lazarus from the dead.

We are not abandoned.

O tellurian dancer, torn from prehistory's dark cave! See, at last upright, he opens as a flower; the sun bleeds for him slowly, sustains him with fire. His time is as a vessel which does not yet sink; it moves on a fairway as a passionless queen . . .

HUGO MANNING.

(This is an excerpt from Hugo Manning's latest book, *This Room Before Sunrise*, published by THE GABER-BOCCHUS PRESS, at 7s. 6d.)

The Collected Poems of Dylan Thomas, 1934–52.
Dent, 12s. 6d.)

THE same single theme throughout eighteen years of poetry: can it still continue to interest us and even excite us? If we consider the handful of new poems in Mr. Dylan Thomas's collected poetry, apparently it can, with a few exceptions. For these poems, with their strictness of form and richly evocative imagery live up to what we had expected after the "Fern Hill Farm", the "Poem in October" and the "Winter's Tale" of the previous collection. Mr. Thomas has sustained generally the new lucidity he had arrived at with, at times, an added concentration of meaning and intensity of feeling.

But the same theme: how does it continue to excite even as it grows sparser and more self-evident? From Birth, Life, Death it is whittled down to Life-Death; and eventually, we imagine, simply to Life, for even Death with Mr. Thomas becomes only another aspect of Life. We romp through the rollicking imagery, the toppling nouns and arrogant verbs, aware that Life is always backed by the undertow of Death,—that Life is Time and Time is Death. We move from "the mouth of time sucking like a sponge", and "the process in the weather of the heart" of the early poems, right through to the "I sail out to die" and "cry me down to kiss the mouth of their dust" of the later poems, and we find Mr. Thomas going on now to greet the "hale dead" with the same exuberance as that with which he once hailed the dying alive.

It can only be the perpetual renewal of this experience of death-in-life and death-under-and-inside-life in Mr. Thomas's own existence that makes the theme fascinate so consistently. If Mr. Thomas's approach to it were philosophical and analytical it would have died long ago, but the experience is so perpetually renewed and perceived afresh (only very occasionally consciously repeated—when the heart of the poem flags) that the life really does remain alive, the content of the poetry remains palpable and sensual. For the poetry is existential rather than metaphysical: it is lived through in the flesh rather than the mind.

And the language is sensual and emotional rather than cerebral both in its music and in its imagery. It is typified by the usual verbal high spirits which are still capable of transforming a well-worn phrase ("When I was a windy boy and a bit"), by the same suggestion of overtones and ambivalence of phrases ("a hoot owl in the looted (fluted) elms", or "as the vale (veiled) mist rides (rises) through the haygold stalls") which suggest that Mr. Thomas is thinking with several senses at once. The words themselves in these later poems seem to take on their own life and push and elbow each other along both musically and visually with an even greater ease and inevitability than before. If the language of the early poems had its own flesh and nerve and blood which gave it substance and movement, the language of the later poems has acquired its own heart and brain which, operating from inside it, direct it and organise it even more closely. Often it seems as though each word were fathered musically by its predecessor, each phrase mothered by some preceding one:

And the black cap of jack—
Daws Sir John's just hill dons,

or:

Or rippling soft in the spinney moon as the silk
And sucked and draked white lake that harps to a hail stone.

Possibly the most interesting, and occasionally irritating, of the new poems is "In country sleep". Here Dylan Thomas can produce the perfect concentration of an image like:

Night and the vein of birds in the winged sloe wrist
of the woods!

where "vein" carries both the implication of the throbbing sound of the birds' songs muffled in the flash of the woods and the gold vein of light which is the visual image the song creates as

it wanders through the dark night; while "wrist" evokes both the shape of the wood and the shape of separate trees. Yet he continues in the following lines to so protract and dilute this image in "pastoral beat of blood", "black wristed spinney", "sermon of blood", and "bird loud vein" as to make it almost worthless.

The same poem has several instances of a most effective modulation of cadences. In fact Dylan Thomas's ability to modulate rhythm and the rise and fall of vowel sounds is at times so effective that it seems to create its own visual pattern, texture and colour,—a secondary visual pattern which forms a contrapuntal theme against the primary pictorial image.

> *As the rain falls, hail on the fleece, as the vale mist rides*
> *Through the haygold stalls, as the dew falls on the wind-*
> *Milled dust of the apple tree and the pounded islands*
> *Of the morning leaves, as the star falls, as the winged*
> *Apple seed glides,*
> *And falls, and flowers in the yawning wound at our sides,*
> *As the world falls, silent as the cyclons of silence.*

The visual image here created by the music is a general downward falling of 'a' sounds, periodically arrested by the rising 'i' and the horizontal 'e' sounds, to descend in the final plunge of "As the world falls"; the whole movement finally arrested and counterbalanced by the upward-turned silver concavity of "silent as the cyclone of silence" with its flanking sibilants and 'i' sounds.

Perhaps it is this contrapuntal interplay between the pictorial and musical imagery which gives the best of these poems their peculiar sense of vibrancy, of immediacy of both the sensory and emotional experience contained in them. The imagery rarely becomes crystallised and coldly eternal like that of Eliot in the Four Quartets. It remains sensuous and glowing, evanescent as life itself, yet made permanent by this continual, spatial movement of musical design against pictorial image. It provides the poetry with a sense of inner perspective, a pulse and vibration which does not so much arrest the experience as allow it to go on and on being perpetuated, music against vision and vision against music as though the would-be transcendance of life were continually being made palpable and tangible by the downward drag of time, and death.

R. H. BOWDEN.